

out in this precious document. The amendments listed were meant to protect our individual liberties and our private property. They serve as a constant reminder that our Nation was meant for its citizens to have liberty, with very little government intrusion into their lives.

Today's modern government has, sadly, strayed very far away from the vision that our Founding Fathers had when they ratified the Bill of Rights. It seems like every day we lose a little bit more of our freedom to the ideals of Big Government and to the standards of socialism.

In Hosea 4:6, God says, "My people are destroyed from a lack of knowledge."

We have a tremendous lack of knowledge in this Nation about the principles that our Founding Fathers gave us in the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights, and we are being destroyed because those foundational principles are being eroded day by day here in Congress, by Presidents, and by the Federal court system.

Please read the U.S. Constitution. Read the Bill of Rights. Teach them to our children and to our grandchildren so that we can come together and demand a constitutionally limited government, as our Founding Fathers intended. We need to begin to rebuild the principles that have made this Nation the greatest in history, the greatest political experiment in the history of mankind. Those principles are what have made this country so great, so powerful, and so successful; and the only way that we will retain that is if we become knowledgeable and start demanding a constitutionally limited government, as our Founding Fathers meant it.

So please read the Constitution. Please read the Bill of Rights. Read what our Founding Fathers said about it. Demand that kind of governance from our elected representatives all across this country, at all levels of government. Our freedom and liberty depend upon it.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless America.

□ 1010

REAUTHORIZE NEW MARKETS TAX CREDIT PROGRAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. NEAL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. NEAL. Madam Speaker, I want to talk about a program that is set to expire at the end of the year if Congress does not act, and it's the New Markets Tax Credit program. I have fought for this program since its enactment in 2000 because it's a cost-effective way to create jobs and drive investment in communities with high rates of poverty and unemployment. I've seen the amazing results of this initiative first hand back home in Mas-

sachusetts, and today I want to highlight one of those Massachusetts projects, the Colonial Theater in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

Let me tell you a little about the New Markets Tax Credit. The program was designed to stimulate investment and economic growth in low-income communities that are traditionally overlooked by conventional capital markets. The New Markets Tax Credit program attracts capital to low-income communities by providing private investors with a 39 percent Federal tax credit for investments made in businesses or economic development projects located in certain areas where the individual poverty rate is at least 20 percent or where median family income is low.

According to the Government Accountability Office, 88 percent of the New Markets Tax Credit investors said they would not have made the investment in a low-income community without New Markets Tax Credits.

Every project or business financed by New Markets Tax Credits is located in a low-income community and/or benefits low-income individuals. The vast majority, over 90 percent of investment dollars generated through New Markets, has gone to communities with levels of economic distress that far exceed the minimum requirements of the law; and 60 percent has gone to communities with very high unemployment rates that are at least 1.5 times the national average.

Through 2009, New Markets cost the Federal Government, in terms of lost revenue, less than \$4 billion. That \$4 billion should be treated as a government investment because it has resulted in \$50 billion in capital projects in those low-income communities and created or retained an estimated 500,000 jobs. According to the Treasury Department, every \$1 of foregone tax revenue under New Markets leverages \$12 of private investment in distressed communities. That's results, in my opinion.

Unfortunately, New Markets is a temporary program and unless Congress acts this month, it will expire on December 31. I am, and have been, the lead Democratic sponsor of legislation to extend this program for 5 years; and I have been leading the charge for years to make this a permanent initiative. I once again call on our colleagues to extend New Markets.

Let's talk about the success of New Markets in Massachusetts. Over 170 businesses in Massachusetts have received New Markets financing: Hot Mama's Foods in Springfield; the River Valley Market in Northampton; the Holyoke Health Center; and now the High Performance Computing Center in Holyoke as well.

But I want to focus today on the Colonial Theater in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Pittsfield is a city in western Massachusetts with a population of about 42,000 people. It's the largest community in that region of the State.

It has struggled with unemployment and urban blight. The Colonial Theater is a rare architectural gem and one of the greatest acoustical houses in the world, located in the heart of Pittsfield. It was built at the turn of the century, and it was closed for more than 50 years. Periodic attempts to redevelop the theater failed for lack of money and sustained public support.

However, thanks to New Markets Tax Credit, financing of \$16.7 million of a total project cost of \$21 million, this 70,000 square foot theater and adjacent building were magnificently restored. With 823 seats, the theater reopened in 2006 and now features an impressive lineup of plays and musical shows. James Taylor is currently performing at the Colonial Theater as part of the cast of "A Christmas Carol." Since its renovation, the theater has hosted Arlo Guthrie, the Four Tops, and Bob Weir of the Grateful Dead will perform this spring. Recent musicals and plays at the Colonial Theater include "The Who's Tommy," "The Producers," "The Wizard of Oz," and "Rent."

After the first 2 years of operation, the independent research firm Center for Creative Community Development estimated that the Colonial Theater sustains a direct economic impact of \$4 million annually and 100 full-time jobs in the Berkshire area.

The Colonial Theater is a symbol of the re-emergence of Pittsfield as an economic and cultural center of the Berkshires. Anchoring the city's comprehensive strategy for downtown revitalization, the restored and vibrant Colonial Theater—along with six-screen Beacon Cinema Complex, also financed with New Markets Tax Credits—has created jobs, attracted new businesses, spurred residential development, and added vitality to this city. Widespread street-level vacancies in downtown Pittsfield has been virtually eliminated and 45 new businesses and restaurants have opened. The restoration has helped attract an estimated 400,000 new visitors to the downtown Pittsfield area each year.

Let's rejuvenate the New Markets Tax Credit program.

WELCOME HOME, COMPANY C

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MCKINLEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCKINLEY. Madam Speaker, today I am happy to announce that Company C, 150th Aviation United of the West Virginia National Guard is on the way home to their families and should arrive this afternoon after serving our Nation for the past 12 months in Kosovo. Truly, there could not be a better Christmas present.

Company C is based in the First District of West Virginia in my hometown of Wheeling and was deployed 1 year

ago to Kosova on a peacekeeping mission. While overseas, the unit was responsible for all aerial operations within their area of responsibility. Company C soldiers logged 2,899 flight hours in 951 missions, they ran multiple mechanical inspections and refueling missions, and dispensed 246,260 gallons of fuel.

The West Virginia National Guard plays a key role in the defense of our country and interests around the world. America could not be prouder to have these men and women as our representatives.

Today I am thrilled to say, Welcome home, Company C.

SUPPORT AMERICA'S CIVIL SERVANTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOYER. Madam Speaker, yesterday we passed a Defense authorization bill. That Defense authorization bill had a 1.6 percent increase for our military personnel. That was an appropriate thing for us to do.

However, at the same time we are looking at reducing very substantially the pay and benefits available to our civilian Federal employees. Madam Speaker, I rise out of a deep concern that this Congress continues to ask one group to sacrifice to bring down our Nation's deficit while not asking others to contribute as well.

That one group are average working Americans. Now, they work for the Federal Government, some perhaps the State and local governments. And there is an antipathy towards government by many, many of the public, many Members of this House. That antipathy is, therefore, focused on the workers. But we have substantially fewer Federal employees today than we had 20 years ago, not only in terms of real numbers but in terms of per capita, where the population has substantially expanded and the number of Federal employees per person to be served has been substantially reduced.

With all of the challenges we face today on a national scale, we ought to ensure that those who help devise solutions and carry them out receive the recognition they are due. We talk a good game on this floor; but, very frankly, we turn it over to employees to carry out our policies. We don't do that. They do it.

They should not be constantly subjected to the kind of verbal attacks and legislative assaults we have seen over the last couple of years and that are included in the bills that have passed this House just this past week. I am speaking, of course, about America's public servants.

Those who work in civilian government positions are no less important to our safety, health, prosperity, and general well-being than their military counterparts who protect our freedom.

I honor our troops. I will be wearing a yellow ribbon later today to welcome

home those troops who have fought to protect country, defeat terrorists, and stabilize the international community. They have blessed America with their courage and their commitment and their service.

□ 1020

But Federal civilian employees make certain that the products we buy and the prescription drugs we use are safe. They perform critical research to advance the fight against cancer and other diseases. They help our farmers and ranchers access new markets for their goods. They see millions of passengers travel safely across our skies and keep watch over our ports and border crossings. They ensure a fair playing field for banks and businesses and enforce the rules we have in place to preserve the health of our air and water from pollution.

So many of the public functions we often take for granted are the purview of the hardworking men and women who constitute our Federal workforce. They're middle class Americans, working Americans, who have, in many cases, chosen to serve their country by lending their talents and skills—some for a short time, others for their entire careers.

As an American, I am proud of the work they do, and as a Member of Congress from Maryland, I am proud to represent a great number of them in this House. But for those who believe that most or even a significant number of our Federal workers live here in Washington, Maryland and Virginia, let me set the record straight. Eighty-five percent of Federal employees live and work somewhere other than the Washington metropolitan area—85 percent. They provide essential services to neighbors and communities in all 50 States and every single one of our districts.

Everything must be on the table when addressing the budget. And by the way, I put on the table a zero COLA adjustment 2 years ago sitting in the White House around the table, having talked to leaders of our Federal employees. I said, look, we need to tighten our belt. Americans are having trouble, we have a lot of our neighbors out of work, we need to tighten our belt, and we took a zero percent. We have taken it 2 years in a row, a \$60 billion contribution already by Federal employees—\$60 billion. We say we can't raise a nickel of additional taxes from the most well off in America, but we can take \$60 billion from average working men and women in this country. Everything must be on the table.

I'm deeply disappointed, however, that we continue to attack these public servants unfairly and single them out. Now when I say "we," I mean the Republican bills that have been offered on this floor and have been discussed.

When middle class families across the country are struggling to make ends meet, Federal employees have already accepted a 2-year pay freeze.

That was appropriate. That was acceptable. But continuing assault on just one segment is not. This comes on top of salaries that are already lower than those for comparable private-sector jobs. Let me repeat that because there is a prejudice that somehow Federal employees are vastly overpaid. In fact, the Federal Salary Council's annual report last month found that Federal workers are paid, on average, 26.3 percent less than comparable private sector jobs.

Now some people don't understand that because what we ask our Federal employees to do requires for the most part high skills. We have a lot of engineers, scientists, and doctors at NIH, at Goddard NASA and in the FBI, highly skilled, highly educated people, a 26.3 percent differential in pay for comparable work that is done in the private sector.

Now most of you who, many of you are sitting there, and perhaps our viewers, are saying, oh, no, that's not true, I know it's not true, because I see what the average salaries are. What they don't see are the average requirements for skills.

Madam Speaker, America's public servants are already making a contribution because they loved this country and recognized that when times are tight, everyone—everyone—everyone has to pitch in, even the best off in America. A belief in smaller government does not grant one license to diminish the contribution made by those who serve in government. If we cut government and need less people to run it, that makes sense.

But what does not make sense is to undermine the ability to recruit and retain the quality of people that we need to continue to make this country, in partnership with the private sector, the greatest country on the face of the Earth. We must always remember that we are blessed, as Lincoln said, with a government of the people, by the people and for the people, that this is us together, the one who serves and the one who benefits from that service. It is the bond of a neighbor and that of a fellow American. Let us remember that. Yes, we need to tighten the belt in a notch. We need to make sure that we are on a fiscally sustainable path. But let us do so in a way that has everybody contribute, not just an unfavored few who serve us well.

FIXING THE PAYROLL TAX

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCLINTOCK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Madam Speaker, one of the items of unfinished business remaining to this Congress is extending the payroll tax cut of last year that funds Social Security. It is an inframarginal tax cut, meaning that it doesn't change economic incentives and therefore it doesn't produce lasting economic growth. But it does provide